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Potential of Tourism Sector in Italy as a Means of Entrepreneurship and Growth for Italian companies

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this chapter are twofold. First, to verify whether the tourism sector may be considered a means of entrepreneurship and growth for Italian companies. The second goal is to identify the key drivers within the tourism consumption trend, as a consequence of changes in the environment.

Italy is universally renowned for its strong vocation for tourism. The Italian tourism sector is one of the most important to the Italian economy, thanks to the richness of the country's resources. The market seems to be particularly susceptible to external pushes linked to the socio-demographic, cultural, political and economic context, which impact on the tastes and desires of individuals.

The chapter is structured as follows. The second section analyzes the theoretical background of the topic. The third section outlines the main focus of the chapter. The fourth section presents future research directions for this topic. Finally, the fifth section presents the conclusion of the study.

Keywords: tourism sector; Italy tourism sector; entrepreneurship; growth

INTRODUCTION

The “tourism sector” belongs to the wider services macro-sector of the “tourism, leisure and communication sector”. It is made up of several companies operating in the following activities: hospitality and catering; travel agencies; entertainment; publishing; telecommunications and IT services. Within the tourism sector, this chapter has focused only on the part related to hospitality and catering, travel agencies and entertainment.

The market for Italian tourism companies is split into domestic and foreign: domestic customers are represented by those who live or operate in Italy and by tourists; while the international market refers to those outside of the country.

The research goals of this chapter are twofold. First, to verify whether the tourism sector may be considered a means of entrepreneurship and growth for Italian companies. The second goal is to identify the key drivers within the tourism consumption trend, as a consequence of changes in the socio-demographic, cultural, political and economic behavior of the context under consideration.

The motivation of this research is related to the question of the sustainability of an investment in this sector, due to strong competition from big hotel chains, especially non-Italian ones. In these terms, profound changes in tourism consumption have taken place over the last 20 years in Italy, due to several internal and external socio-demographic, cultural, political and economic factors, which have had a strong impact on companies' activities. In addition, the entrance of big groups into the sector

(such as big tour operators) has increased the turnover of the sector, thanks to a series of investments which smaller companies have not been able to make. In such a context, the evaluating the business opportunities for tourism companies become interesting, as well as the reasons underlying such market tendencies.

The chapter is structured as follows. The second section of the chapter analyzes the theoretical background of the topic. The third section outlines the main focus of the chapter, with particular reference to issues, controversies and problems. The fourth section presents future research directions for this topic. Finally, the fifth section presents the conclusion of the study.

BACKGROUND

Companies find their reason to exist in satisfying human needs, and indicating an awareness of a lack (Airolidi, Brunetti, & Coda, 2005). Human needs can be divided into two different categories (Giacosa, 2011) *basic needs* and *secondary* (or higher-level needs). The basic needs are characterized by the need to meet basic requirements such as eating or drinking while the secondary are characterized by the necessity to satisfy desires that are not basic, such as travel and using all the services connected to it. The secondary needs can be generated by wanting to belong to a specific social class, *social needs* (Montanari, 2003) or by the need, using language consisting of tangible and intangible elements, to achieve a social condition, *communication needs* (Cappati & Montanari, 1999).

Tourism is one of the major economic sectors which many countries depend on. For these reasons a series of studies have analysed this sector in general (Aiello, 1996; Buhalis, 1998; Santarelli, 1997; Sciarelli and Rossi, 2007; Tribe, 2011) and its development (Murphy, 2013). Some research has analyzed the companies that move into this sector (Cantino, 1994; Cercola, 1984; Dammacco 1992) and their transformation (Moroni 2008; Montanari, 2004). Particular attention has been paid to aspects related to the marketing of this sector (Holloway, 1994; Pencarelli, 2001; Ryglová, 2011; Sciarelli & Della Corte, 2003). The concept of brand image has been widely studied by researchers in the area of marketing (Kim & Kim, 2005; Sahin & Baloglu, 2011). A careful analysis has been made, in this sector, of a growing demand for higher quality service and on the change in and the evolution of customers (Chen & Chen 2010; Lee & Burns, 2004; Vajčnerová & Ryglová, 2013).

Some scholars have studied the impact on the economic growth of a small tourism-driven economy by an increase in the growth rate of international tourism demand (Shubert, Brida, & Risso, 2011).

Several researchers have studied particular aspects that drive the tourism sector, such as:

- the effect of wine tourism on the economic growth of the region, on the wine industry and on increasing the profitability and sustainability of tourism in the area (Baillet, Diotallevi, & Marchini, 2010; Carlsen & Charters, 2006; Hall, 2003; Hall & Sharples, 2008; Notta, 2011; Viassone, 2012) and as a representation of a business opportunity for wine companies (Marks, 2011; Ritchie, 2009). This phenomenon of wine tourism has been studied and analyzed showing that every year there is a steady increase (Clemente-Ricolfea, Escribá-Pérez, Rodríguez-Barrio, & Buitrago-Vera, 2012; Groves and Belk, 1998). By attracting tourism, the wine sector has a positive impact on regional competitiveness and its drivers (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2008; Viassone, 2009; Vrontis & Viassone, 2013; Zanni, 2004).

- health tourism and medical tourism where the health tourism is based on “travel where the primary purpose is treatment in pursuit of better health” and medical tourism “incorporates health screening, hospitalization, and surgical operations” (Henderson, 2004; Saviano, Parida, Caputo, & Datta Saroj, 2013);

- ecotourism, the experience of domestic tourists and an investigation of the role of authenticity in this experience (Smaoui & Ben Ali, 2013, Franch, Martinim, Buffa, & Parisi, 2008);

- sport-tourism where we analyze the increase of tourists interested in sports grounds (Hinch & Hingham, 2011).

The resources for promoting the tourism sector are limited, so it's important to create and implement a model to appraise the investments made “ex ante”, and monitor the investments for returns obtained (Sousa & Sarmento, 2013).

In addition, the impact of new technologies on the business of tourism, which have given rise to e-

tourism, has been analysed by several researchers (Addis, 1999; Bing & Fesenmaier, 2000; Buhalis, 1998; Marcussen, 2001; Missikoff, 2001), as a consequence of the entry of companies providing low-cost, Internet-based tourism services into the market. The Internet channel (Gamble, 1990; Giacosa, 2003) is also profitable in terms of direct sales on behalf of companies, and circumvents the need for middlemen such as tour operators and travel agents (Massaroni, Golinelli, & Ricotta, 2000).

The present study contributes to expanding the literature via the following two observation points:

- firstly, although some studies have made a comparison between business opportunities in wine sectors and the manufacturing sector (which represents a driving force of the Italian economy) (Giacosa, Giovando, & Mazzoleni, 2014), no study to date has compared the business opportunities in tourism and the manufacturing sectors; in these terms, this study fills a gap in the literature;

- secondly, the evolution of tourism consumption is observed by using the “input–output” model: distinguishing the general context in which the company operates into various sub-systems, we examined the impact of these sub-systems on the tourism consumption in terms of inputs. In addition, the outputs produced by companies are also considered, because they have an impact on tourism consumption. Previous studies have focused on single factors that influence tourism consumption (e.g. cultural and social factors), or identified a series of factors that influence consumption, but without considering them with respect to the various sub-systems that form the general environment surrounding these companies.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Issues, Controversies, Problems

The research goals of this chapter are twofold. Firstly, to verify whether the tourism sector may be considered as a means of entrepreneurship and growth for Italian companies. The second goal is to identify the key drivers within the tourism consumption trend, as a consequence of changes in the socio-demographic, cultural, political and economic behavior of the context in consideration, and also due to the world consumption crisis.

In order to achieve the research objectives, we developed the following hypotheses:

H1: the tourism sector may be considered as a means of entrepreneurship and growth for Italian companies, thanks to the nature of its territory, its favorable climate, its natural and cultural resources in terms of landscapes, culture, food and wines, monuments and history, and the experience of its producers.

With the aim of exploring the hypotheses mentioned above, the research methodology has been carried out in the following phases:

- 1) First phase: the hypotheses were analyzed by examining the existing literature, both national and international, written about the tourism sector and the drivers in the consumption trend, this highlighted a series of external and internal variables that influence tourism consumption;

- 2) Second phase: the research methodology was differentiated in relation to the following research goals:

- a) The first research goal: the objective is quantitative and thus, the enquiry is also quantitative. The first objective concerns examining the role of the tourism sector for the Italian economic landscape in terms of added value, number of companies and levels of employment from 2000 to 2012, to verify whether the tourism sector may be considered a means of entrepreneurship and growth for Italian companies. The quantitative data comes from a range of market research, carried out by major Italian trade associations operating in the service sector and market research companies, the research differentiates between Italian and foreign customers;

- b) The second research goal: the second goal is to identify the key drivers within the tourism consumption trend, as a consequence of changes in the socio-demographic, cultural, political and economic behavior of the context in consideration. This objective is qualitative in nature – i.e. related to identifying and understanding the factors that give rise to changes in the consumption of tourism in the Italian market.

Firstly, a qualitative survey of the context in which companies operate within the tourism sector was carried out by adopting the input–output model (Ferrero, 1987; Melis, 2001). The companies belong to

a general environment (Airoldi, Brunetti, & Coda, 2005; Brusa, 1986; Campedelli, 1998; Saita, 2005), which can be understood as the context in which they operate, which could be divided into a series of sub-systems that affect the company's input-output logic and, as a consequence, impact on the consumption choices of individuals. It was found that the company can be considered as a cell of a living organism, surrounded by its environment, which takes on natural, technological, cultural, social, economic and political characteristics (Cricchio, 1980; Giacosa, Giovando, & Mazzoleni, 2014; Zappa, 1927). In order to ensure a thorough investigation, we set out the following sub-systems: natural-physical and technological; cultural and social; economic; political-legislative ones. For each sub-system, we analyzed the inputs with the greatest influence on companies' activities and tourism consumption, and the outputs of companies into their environment, which may in turn influence consumption habits.

Secondly, in order to conclude the above qualitative analysis using the input-output model, the qualitative findings derived from 20 interviews with operators (such as managers or owners of major companies) in the sector were aggregated, with the aim of identifying the drivers of major influences on tourism consumption over the last decade, according to the experience of the respondents. These interviews were qualitative in nature, semi-structured (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Corbetta, 2003; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), and prepared, executed and analyzed by all of the authors.

This study is interested in solving the problem of understanding and identifying business opportunities for the companies in the tourism sector. We tried to solve this problem in the following ways: firstly, considering that the GDP trend within a country influences the economic conditions of the population and creates an impact on consumption, we analyzed this impact on tourism consumption. Secondly, to strengthen this issue, we analyze the impacts on business opportunities of several kinds of factors, such as cultural, social, natural and legislative ones.

Solutions and Recommendations

In this section, the research results are presented in relation to:

- the role of the tourism sector in the Italian economy;
- the consumption drivers of tourism consumption in Italy.

The role of the tourism sector in the Italian economy

The role of the tourism sector in the Italian economy is identified by a comparison between the tourism and the manufacturing sectors. The manufacturing sector is a driving force of the Italian economic system.

Firstly, we compared the trends of added value of the Italian tourism sector to the Italian manufacturing sector from 2000 to 2012 (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison between tourism sector and manufacturing sector (index numbers of value added)

	2000	2011	2012
Tourism sector	5.2	5.4	5.4
Manufacturing sector	27.7	24.8	24.2

Source: Confcommercio, 2013

The added value within the tourism sector has been characterized by slight growth between 2000 and 2011, while in 2012 remains equal to 2011. On the other hand, the manufacturing sector is characterized by a significant decrease between 2000 and 2011 that continues in 2012. Therefore, the tourism sector has managed to maintain its size and even to increase it mildly, despite the economic crisis of recent years has managed to maintain its size and even to increase it slightly. From this comparison, the importance of tourism for the Italian economy can be clearly seen, as can its ability to increase value over the time considered. This is in stark contrast to the manufacturing sector.

Secondly, we strengthen the analysis of value added by looking at the number of companies involved in the tourism sector, compared to the total Italian economy (Table 2).

Table 2 – Companies in the tourism sector

	2011	%	2012	%	2013	%
Tourism	601,012	9.8	613,003	10.1	618,698	10.2
<i>Hospitality</i>	<i>46,800</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>47,661</i>	<i>0.8</i>	48,221	<i>0.8</i>
<i>Catering</i>	<i>345,537</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>353,846</i>	<i>5.8</i>	<i>357,886</i>	<i>5.9</i>
<i>Travel agencies</i>	<i>17,151</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>17,404</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>17,457</i>	<i>0.3</i>
<i>Entertainment</i>	<i>66,334</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>67,601</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>68,015</i>	<i>1.1</i>
Total economy	6,110,074	100.0	6,093,158	100.0	6,067,305	100.0

Source: Confcommercio, 2013

In Italy, in 2013, the tourism sector includes 618,698 companies (10.2% of the Italian companies). In particular, 65% of the companies operate in the field of accommodation and catering, 2.8% are travel agencies and 11% work in the entertainment industry (Table 2).

It is shown that the total number of companies in Italy has decreased by 0.7%, while the number of companies belonging to the tourism sector has increased by 10.2%. In particular, there was a steady increase in the number of companies in the tourism sector from 9.8% in 2011 to 10.2% in 2013.

Thirdly, the comparison between tourism sector and other sectors is made by looking at employment levels (Table 3).

Table 3 – Average number of full-time employees (*)

	2000	2011	2012
	Annual Work Units	Annual Work Units	Annual Work Units
Agriculture	6.3%	5.1%	5.0%
Manufacturing	28.5%	26.1%	25.6%
Services	65.1%	68.8%	69.4%
- among which: tourism	6.9%	7.7%	7.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Confcommercio, 2013

* Part-time and seasonal employees represent fractions of annual work units.

The tourism sector employs 2.6 million work units, of which 1.5 million units work in the reception and catering area, 290,000 in the entertainment industry, 205,000 in publishing and telecommunications and 398,000 in IT .

It can be seen that the tourism sector follows the opposite trend to other sectors. Indeed, the average number of full-time employees in tourism sector has changed from 6.9% in 2000 to 7.8% in 2012, while the agriculture sector changed from 6.3% in 2000 to 5.0% in 2012 and the manufacturing sector changed from 28.5% in 2000 to 25.6% in 2012.

Since the start of the crisis, world tourism declined until the end of 2009 (UNWTO, 2010) and recovered in 2010. The recovery was confirmed in 2011 (UNWTO, 2011) and is predicted to remain in 2012 and 2013.

Concluding, it appears that the tourism sector in Italy, in these years, has increased both from the point of view of its added value, the number of the companies involved and level of employment.

H1 is confirmed. The tourism sector may be considered a means of entrepreneurship and growth for Italian companies. This is due to the nature of its territory, its favorable climate, its natural and cultural resources in terms of landscapes, culture, food and wines, monuments and history, and the experience of its producers.

The drivers of tourism consumption in Italy

The consumption trend of individuals may be influenced by the following sub-systems (Giacosa, 2011; Giacosa, Giovando, & Mazzoleni, 2014):

- Natural-physical and technological;

- Cultural and social;
- Economic;
- Political and legislative.

1) The natural-physical and technological sub-system

Natural-physical and technological environment is represented by the natural factors (such as the richness of the territory and the climate) and some factors developed by humans (such as urbanization) which impact on the tourism sector. In particular, according to input-output model, the inputs that influence the tourism consumption are the following:

a) The characteristics of the environment: the variety of the territory in terms of natural features (such as sea, mountains, hills, lakes, etc.), the richness in terms of cultural and historical features and its climate impact on the likelihood of an area to generate tourism. The availability of labor, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, impact on the production and distribution processes and on the opportunities for companies (for example, by the sea during the summer and in the mountains during the winter). Even the availability of transport and communication infrastructures could influence individual consumption, making a place more or less connected with the rest of the world. The characteristics of the environment impact on the types of products offered to tourists and, consequently, on how tourists choose to spend money (Table 4).

Table 4 – The tourist choice in terms of various items of expenditure (millions of euros)

Items of expenditure	Italians	Foreigners	Total	Total (%)
Hospitality structures	10.724	8.944	19.668	60.9
Restaurants and pizzeria	5.234	3.448	8.682	26.9
Bars, coffee shops, ice cream parlours	2.083	1.840	3.923	12.2
Total for hospitality and catering service	18.041	14.232	32.273	100.0

Source: National Tourism Research Institute, 2013 (based on 2010 data)

The expenses for hospitality structures are the highest (60.9%), for both Italians and foreigners, followed by restaurants and pizzeria (26.9%) and then bars, coffee shops and ice cream parlours (12.2%). In addition, more than 50% of hospitality and catering service demand comes from Italian tourists (56%). It can be seen that the environment in which companies operate allows them to offer several types of tourism products, which are appreciated by tourists.

b) Demographic factors: tourism consumption is influenced by the characteristics of the population, such as the population growth, the degree of urbanization, the segmentation by age, sex, social class, occupation, the birth and death rates and the number of immigrants. The ageing of the population has changed tourism consumption. In 2020 people aged over 65 will constitute 14.1% of the population (20% in 2065), while in 2012 they amounted to 12.3%. This will lead to a change in tourism consumption: after reaching a certain age, the products chosen change, choosing city sight-seeing and culture such as art, cruises and not adventure trips, while younger consumers choose different product types.

2) The cultural and social sub-system

These sub-systems are strongly correlated:

a) the cultural sub-system influences the values and tastes of consumers, impacting on their choices in terms of consumption and also creating trends in the tourism market. In particular, the level of education, the cultural background and different lifestyles represent important inputs that give rise to changes in tourism consumption in the Italian market. The attention given to improving lifestyle quality increase the consumption of green and healthy tourism, such as beauty spas and bed and breakfasts in the country. The need to save money has increased the consumption of last minute or last second products, while family needs impact on the demands for package-tourism. Cultural factors have generated a change in Italians' choices and preferences regarding tourism consumption in the last decade. There has been a diversification in the consumption of tourism, which is also due to the different ways in which people consume tourism during the year;

b) the social sub-system is represented by the division of society into groups or classes, as well as the relations between these groups and the possibility of social mobility. Since high-end tourism is considered a sort of status symbol, the consumption of expensive tourism products represents a manifestation of a certain level of social status, as well as signaling belonging to a certain class. The consumption of Italian tourism shows much attention to the quality of the product being purchased. This trend is also related to the fact that high-end tourism is a status symbol, so much so that consumers are willing to pay high prices in order to enjoy high-end product.

Cultural and social factors impact on the choice of tourists in terms of tourism products chosen (Table 5).

Table 5 – Tourist consumption in Italy (millions of euros)

Tourism typology	Italians	Foreigners	Total	Total (%)
Holiday houses	16.906	10.199	27.105	37.4%
Hospitality structures	25.486	19.821	45.307	62.6%
Total	42.392	30.020	72.412	100.0%

Source: National Tourism Research Institute, 2013 (based on 2010 data)

There are more hospitality structures expenses (62.6%), compared to the holiday houses ones (37.4%).

We then analyzed the demand of Italians for travel (split between Italy and abroad) and their chosen destination (Table 6).

Table 6 – Italians travels and destination (on 100 individuals)

Year	Italy	Foreign	Total
2009	23.8	6.7	28.0
2010	22.5	6.5	27.0
2011	19.6	5.4	23.6
2012	18.7	6.0	23.2

Source Istat, 2013

Between 2009 and 2012, the number of Italian travelers has decreased from 28 to 23.2. Distinguishing between Italian and foreign destinations, the decrease in travelling to Italian destinations was more than the decrease in travelling to foreign destinations. In addition, we looked at each destination of Italian tourists, classifying the types of tourism (Table 7).

Table 7 – Italians travels classified for country and tourism typologies (EUR/millions)

Country visited	Hotel, Resort		House for rent		Visiting relatives, friends		Other		No overnight		Total	
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
Austria	324	336	61	93	44	68	79	66	360	333	868	896
Belgium	88	79	27	24	38	38	30	31	1	0	184	172
Croatia	25	35	45	77	18	8	70	39	23	10	181	169
France	975	918	272	227	351	318	336	340	123	130	2.057	1.933
Germany	542	499	149	163	184	200	382	289	41	37	1.298	1.188
Greece	367	353	162	161	54	57	31	42	0	0	614	613
Holland	152	174	78	71	44	43	54	53	0	0	328	341
Portugal	125	85	27	19	15	20	14	11	0	0	181	135
UK	406	380	391	344	239	293	184	170	1	0	1.221	1.187
Romania	54	42	21	18	93	80	26	35	0	0	194	175
Slovenia	37	33	10	4	5	9	8	12	420	374	480	432
Spain	932	820	358	324	193	197	112	82	0	0	1.595	1.423
Sweden	52	46	11	7	12	18	5	7	0	0	80	78
Other	559	574	205	169	187	218	103	92	2	1	1.056	1.054
Total Europe	4.638	4.374	1.817	1.701	1.477	1.567	1.434	1.269	971	885	10.337	9.796
Russia	239	265	48	62	65	61	13	14	0	0	365	402
Switzerland	363	291	82	53	188	148	46	48	662	763	1.341	1.304
Other	437	524	76	77	185	237	76	56	2	0	776	894
Total Europe Extra Ue	1.039	1.080	206	192	438	446	135	118	664	763	2.482	2.600
Brasil	277	213	63	80	82	87	22	27	0	0	444	407
Canada	105	85	28	22	58	47	3	6	0	0	194	160
Cuba	49	44	37	21	9	12	1	2	0	0	96	79
Mexico	168	195	10	7	8	9	2	3	0	0	188	214
United States of America	1.428	1.275	244	240	237	309	106	95	0	0	2.015	1.919
Other	358	293	42	46	116	126	36	24	1	0	553	489
Total America	2.385	2.105	424	416	510	590	170	157	1	0	3.490	3.268
Egypt	322	253	1	6	46	33	33	13	0	0	402	305
Other	710	764	92	133	221	259	70	80	2	0	1.095	1.236
Total Africa	1.032	1.017	93	139	267	292	103	93	2	0	1.497	1.541
China	519	499	71	108	25	24	14	37	0	0	629	668
Japan	109	133	35	16	10	9	10	5	0	0	164	163
Other	1.129	1.368	167	216	126	108	46	68	0	0	1.468	1.760
Total Asia	1.757	2.000	273	340	161	141	70	110	0	0	2.261	2.591
Australia	163	164	110	122	44	68	26	33	0	0	343	387
Other	54	48	2	6	1	3	8	8	0	0	65	65
Total Oceania	217	212	112	128	45	71	34	41	0	0	408	452
Data not available	17	25	2	2	0	1	18	31	0	0	37	59
Total	11.085	10.813	2.927	2.918	2.898	3.108	1.964	1.819	1.638	1.648	20.512	20.307

Source: Banca d'Italia, 2014

We can see how spending is distributed among the different types of Italian traveler accommodation. It can be seen that between 2012 and 2013, there is an increase in spending in the homes of relatives and friends category and generally a decrease in spending in other structures (hotel, resort, rented houses). This shows that the mode of travel is changing with a greater number using the facilities of relatives and friends. This is correlated with the effects of the financial and economic crisis on Italian families. There is also an increase in spending on travel without spending on an overnight stay. This shows a tendency to increase travel to places where they might find free accommodation to minimize travel costs.

In addition, cultural and social factors impact on the choice in terms of product types, location, duration of the holidays, and others. In particular, a series of key factors that influence tourism consumption are (National Tourism Research Institute, 2013):

- The courtesy of the population living in the area (60.8%);
- The quality and variety of food and beverages (50.6%);
- The possibilities in terms of leisure, amusement and entertainment (30.8%);
- How welcoming the hospitality outlets are (29.0%);
- The country's respect for the environment (22.3%);
- The cultural offerings (19.9%);
- The tidiness of the area and of the hospitality structures (16.3%);
- The competitiveness of food service costs (9.4%);
- The competitiveness of accommodation costs (9.3%);
- The traffic level (8.9%);
- The availability of information for tourists (6.2%);
- The cost of local transport (2.4%).

4) The economic sub-system

The economic sub-system is represented by the general economic system, which dictates the standard of living within a community. In a market economy, the inputs are related to the country's economic situation, and its prospects for development. In addition, companies have an impact on the economic system, as they act as a producer and distributor of wealth, both through the goods and services they produce, and through remuneration for the production factors used.

The economic conditions and consumption habits of the population are strongly interdependent. In fact, populations on a lower income allocate a lower percentage of their income to tourism than to other categories (e.g., eating, medical expenses, clothing, home, education, etc.). On the other hand, greater wealth within a population creates a change in purchasing choices, especially with regard to luxury tourism.

The GDP trend within a country influences the economic conditions of the population and creates an impact on consumption, including tourism consumption. We analyzed the trend of Italian Gross Domestic Product in Italy (GDP) (Table 8).

Table 8 – GDP in Italy – average annual variations (%)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
GDP ITALY	1,7	-1,2	-5,5	1,7	0,5	-2,4	-1,9

Source: Istat, 2013

Italy was affected by a decrease in GDP in 2012, and its prospects for 2013 are negative. The performance of the Italian GDP is one of the factors that may have influenced Italian consumption patterns; this is even clearer when compared with the average for the OECD countries. However, even with the decrease of GDP, the tourism sector trend is increasing.

Table 9 shows the costs (EUR million) for Italian travelers divided by the reason for the trip.

Table 9 – Expenditure broken down by reason for travel of Italian travelers (EUR/million)

Reason for travel	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
holidays	8.751	9.140	9.157	8.030	7.551
study, courses	823	822	958	1.275	1.156
religious reasons	99	140	171	130	167
care, spa	194	125	119	95	63
honeymooners	735	750	865	910	753
other personal reasons	3.169	3.158	2.946	3.259	3.611
Personal	13.771	14.135	14.216	13.699	13.301
seasonal jobs	277	406	323	489	398
conferences, congresses	350	365	399	309	392
other	5.617	5.510	5.645	6.015	6.218
Work / Business	6.244	6.281	6.367	6.813	7.008
Total	20.015	20.416	20.583	20.512	20.309

Source Banca d'Italia, 2014

It emerged that the number of people who travel in recent years has declined, but they spent more (per capita) than in the past. In addition, we can see that in the field “Personal”, after an increase in 2010 and 2011, there has been a decrease, while in the “Work / Business” there has been an increase in 2012 and 2013. Basically over the years the total expenditure of Italians in the sector has increased. The total spent for personal reasons is around 65% of the total expenditure in the field.

In particular, we can see that from 2009 to 2013 has spending on holidays has decreased. In 2009, this expenditure totaled 8,751 while in 2013 it amounted to 7,552 a decrease of 14%. The consequence of the Italian crisis has led families to reduce the cost of traveling for holidays. On the other hand the travel-related courses and studies have increased, going from 823 in 2009 to 1,156 in 2013, an increase of 29%. This shows how, even in the crisis, people are still investing in their training and specialization. Finally, as a logical consequence of the general framework the costs of travel and spa care decreased from 194 in 2009 to 63 in 2013, a dramatic decrease of 68%.

5) The political-legislative sub-system

The political-legislative sub-system is represented by the political regime and the legal and legislative environment. This impacts on the legislative framework within which the companies in the tourism sector have to operate. In particular, legislation on companies’ activities and tax on tourism consumption may cause a reduction in consumption. Also European community legislation that has impacted on the tourism policies aimed at facilitating young entrepreneurship has influenced the creation and development of companies aimed at enhancing different types of tourism.

Larger companies such as tour operators and hotel chains can influence the political and legislative framework thanks to their bargaining power, and thereby potentially encourage a number of legislative initiatives that will favor companies in the tourism sector (for example, green tourism companies, bed and breakfasts in the country).

H2 is confirmed. The Italian tourism market appears to be particularly susceptible to the pressures of sub-systems which make up the general environment in which the company operates. In particular, the natural-physical and technological; cultural and social; economic; and political-legislative sub-systems, which form the above-mentioned general environment, have an impact on the inputs that affect companies in the sector. Also the company may impact its environment in terms of output.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The implications of this study are related to the potential of the tourism sector in Italy. Indeed, this sector represents an interesting area of opportunities for companies. This applies to all the companies involved directly and indirectly in the sector, such as hospitality and catering, travel agencies, tour

operators, entertainment, publishing companies, communications and promotion companies and IT services.

It has been shown that the tourism sector is an important resource for Italy to be enhanced and implemented in terms of company opportunities. Even with the difficulties of the general economy of the country, the tourism sector is an important one for the Italian economy.

The importance of tourism sector is duly acknowledged in the economic and social framework and, consequently, in the literature and connected business research.

Business studies need to be increased in this field: in recent years, while the manufacturing sector in Italy has declined in terms of value added, number of companies and employment, the tourism sector has had the opposite tendency. In particular, researchers should analyze its ability to attract resources from abroad, with the aim of facing and overcoming the crisis situation in Italy.

In addition, business researches should encourage Italian politician to increase and facilitate investments in the tourism sector, which would be regarded as strategic for the country. Therefore, the development of the tourism sector would compensate for the losses in other sectors.

To overcome the limitations of the research, we suggest comparing the potential and dynamics of the tourism sector with that of other economic sectors, that are representative of the Italian economy, such as fashion, food and wine, home furniture. Additionally, it would be desirable to use suitable econometric models to simulate the impact of a series of exogenous and endogenous variables on the business of tourism.

CONCLUSION

Italy is universally renowned for its strong attraction for tourists. Consequently, the Italian tourism sector is one of the most important to the Italian economy, thanks to the richness of the country's landscapes and its resources in terms of cultural, human and marketing capabilities. Other factors which positively impact on the appeal to tourists, both Italian and foreign, include the courtesy of the population, the possibilities in terms of entertainment and amusement, the welcome provided by accommodation structures, and the country's respect for the environment.

It emerged that Italy stands out for its tourism production: the ability to produce tourism creates a sort of cult for tourism, affecting the consumption of tourism by Italians.

From the comparison between added value from the Italian tourism sector and manufacturing sectors, the importance of tourism for the Italian economy can be seen, as can its ability to increase value added over the time considered. This is in stark contrast to the manufacturing sector and, as showed, to the trend of the Italian economy. Despite a decrease of Italian GDP in 2012 (and the negative prospects for 2013), the tourism sector trend is increasing. This means that the field shows interesting opportunities for businesses.

This trend can be justified through the input-output model: by observing the dynamics arising from the sub-systems which compose the general environment to which companies belong, we identified some relevant inputs that impact on the companies activities. In addition, the activity of the companies in turn affects consumer attitudes by means of a series of outputs.

The characteristics of the environment impact on the products offered to the tourists and, consequently, on how tourists spend their money in terms of the various items of expenditure.

The drivers of the tourism trend in Italy are linked to several social and cultural factors which influence both the values and tastes of consumers, impacting on their choices in terms of consumption and also creating trends in tourism market, and the division of society into groups or classes, as well as the relations between these groups and the possibility of social mobility.

In economic terms, observing the expenditure pro-capita of Italians, it is shown that the number of people travelling in recent years has declined, but they spent more than in the past. It can be seen that while the number of people travelling in recent years has declined, they spent more (pro-capita) than in the past. In particular, in personal expenditure, after an increase in 2010 and 2011, there has been a decrease, while work expenditure increased in 2012 and 2013. In terms of employment, the tourism sector counters the trend shown in other sectors, because the level of employment has increased.

The political-legislative sub-system impacts on companies' activities through the legislative framework within which the companies operate. However companies, especially larger companies, could affect the political and legislative framework thanks to their bargaining power.

In conclusion, looking at the tourism sector may create new convenient business opportunities, both from analyzing the trends in individual consumption and by creating the conditions for relevant investments from companies.

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ADDITIONAL READING SECTION

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Tourism sector: it belongs to the wider services macro-sector of “tourism, leisure and communication sector” and is made of several types of companies operating in the following activities: hospitality and catering; travel agencies; entertainment; publishing; telecommunications and IT services.

Human needs: these are the needs manifested by each individual, which represent specific life

necessities dictated by perceptions of aspects that are lacking. Such human needs are perceived according to the framework of a mental rating scale. According to this rating scale, these needs could be classified in different categories: primary needs, which are linked to the necessity to make use of goods that are essential in order to meet basic life conditions; secondary needs, which are represented by aspects that are not necessary in a strict sense.

Company environment: the context in which a company operates, which could be divided into a series of sub-systems, that affect the company's input-output logic and, as a consequence, have an impact on the consumption choices of individuals.

Company sub-systems: these are the parts into which the company environment could be divided. In order to ensure a detailed investigation, the company environment could be divided into the following sub-systems: natural-physical and technological; cultural and social; economic; political-legislative ones.

Natural-physical and technological sub-system: represented by the natural factors and some factors developed by humans which impact on the tourism sector.

Cultural sub-system: influences the values and tastes of consumers, impacting on their choices in terms of consumption and also creating trends in tourism market.

Social sub-system: represented by the division of society into groups or classes, as well as the relations between these groups and the possibility of social mobility.

Economic sub-system: represented by the general economic system, which dictates the living standards within a community.

Political-legislative sub-system: represented by the political regime and the legal and legislative environment, which impact on the legislative framework within which the companies operate.

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